

# WOMEN VETERANS HEALTH CARE

*You served, you deserve  
★ the best care anywhere.*



## Women Veterans: Transgender Health Care

VA provides high quality, respectful care to Transgender Veterans. In order to tailor healthcare services to your healthcare needs, it is important to have a conversation with your provider about your sexual identity. Your provider may discuss these healthcare concerns with you:

### Hormone Treatment

Talk with your provider about hormone treatment. If you are starting hormones for the first time, ask about the things you need to watch out for while taking these medicines. If you are a transgender woman, ask about estrogen and blood clots, swelling, high or low blood pressure and high blood sugar. Be sure and take the hormones only as prescribed by your provider.

### Cardiovascular Health

Transgender persons may be at increased risk for heart attack or stroke, not only from hormone use but from cigarette smoking, being overweight, high blood pressure and diabetes. Symptoms can include (but are not limited to) pain in the chest, shortness of breath, and rapid and irregular heartbeats. Be sure to tell your provider if you experience any of these symptoms.

### Cancer

It is very rare to develop cancer due to hormone treatment, but your provider will evaluate you for this possibility during your check-ups. Your provider will also check for possible cancer of your sex organs, if they have not been removed, and breast tissue. While cancer is rare, it should be screened during your routine physical examinations.

### Sexually Transmitted Infections

Transgender women may be sexually active, and they are at risk for sexually transmitted infections. It is very important to practice safe sex so you will not become infected with HIV or other sexually transmitted infections. Ask your provider about safe sex practices.

### Substance Use/Alcohol

Transgender women who drink alcohol may drink too much and risk damage to the liver or other organs. Alcohol and hormones may be more dangerous when taken together.

### Tobacco Use

Many transgender women smoke cigarettes. This increases their risk of heart and lung disease, especially in persons taking hormones.

### Depression and Suicide Risk

Veterans have a higher rate of depression and suicide than the general population. Transgender women also experience higher rates of depression and suicidal ideation than the general population. Please talk with your provider or your therapist about your feelings and tell him or her if you feel sad or depressed. Many good treatments are available for depression.

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) Program, Office of Patient Care Services



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## Trauma Exposure

Transgender women may experience violence in their intimate relationships or in their lives generally. VA offers access to counseling and other mental health services.

## Fitness

Like many women, transgender women may be overweight and do not exercise. A healthy diet and a frequent exercise routine are just as important for transgender persons as for anyone else. If you are planning to have surgery, your surgeon will want to be sure you are in good physical condition to do well during and after surgery. Try to eat a healthy diet and try to exercise for at least 20 minutes three times a week.

**Women Veterans Program Managers:** All VA medical centers and many Vet Centers have a designated Women Veterans Program Manager to help women Veterans access VA benefits and health care services. To find the VA medical center or Vet Center nearest you, call 1-877-222-8387 or visit [www.va.gov/directory](http://www.va.gov/directory).

**Women Veteran Call Center:** Women Veterans can call 1-855-VA-WOMEN (1-855-829-6636) to ask questions about available VA services and resources.

**LGBT Program Office:** The Office of Patient Care Services has a LGBT program designed to assist LGBT Veterans in accessing quality health care. For more information visit our website at [http://www.patientcare.va.gov/Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transgender LGBT Veteran Care.asp](http://www.patientcare.va.gov/Lesbian_Gay_Bisexual_and_Transgender_LGBT_Veteran_Care.asp)

## Additional Resources:

Resource	Link
Gay and Lesbian Medical Association	<a href="http://www.glma.org">http://www.glma.org</a>
The Fenway Institute – The National LGBT Health Education Center	<a href="http://www.lgbthealtheducation.org">http://www.lgbthealtheducation.org</a>
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention – LGBT Health	<a href="http://www.cdc.gov/lgbthealth">http://www.cdc.gov/lgbthealth</a>
VA's Office of Patient Care Services LGBT Program	<a href="http://www.patientcare.va.gov/Lesbian_Gay_Bisexual_and_Transgender_LGBT_Veteran_Care.asp">http://www.patientcare.va.gov/Lesbian Gay Bisexual and Transgender LGBT Veteran Care.asp</a>
Women's Health Services	<a href="http://www.womenshealth.va.gov">www.womenshealth.va.gov</a>

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